

time lived Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other distinguished writers.

Instead of troubling you with further proofs of the inapplicability of this expression, allow me to question another leading surmise, viz., that from the death of Arnolfo until the building of the dome by Brunelleschi, not only was there no other man in Europe capable of vaulting so large a space, but that the grossest ignorance on the subject prevailed *all over Europe*; for we are told that the scientific men of all Europe were invited to the task. It would require some determination, and—you will perhaps agree with me—some consideration, to declare that William de Wykeham and William de Woorde were not competent to such a performance,—and they lived during the assigned period. And so did Brunelleschi's artistic rivals Donatello and the admirable sculptor Ghiberti.

The florid style does not suit historical research: inconsiderate praise heaped on one man too frequently carries with it censure on others, without its being intended; this was remarkably the case when the kind-hearted professor, in the glow of friendship, stated that the neglect of one of the excellences of Cavalieri Matas's design for the west façade of the cathedral, namely, homogeneity of style with the original (bald, timid, and flat development, devoid of striking sentiment, &c.), was the cause of the failure of so many other designs. That, again, is a mistake, for several of those designs were approved, and only required, it would seem, one objection to be removed, and that objection—*expense*—is also an obstacle to Cavalieri Matas's design. In science compliments are dangerous adjuncts, and to pass one to a living architect at the expense of Vignola and his compeer Palladio, is hardly prudent. Now that the members of the Royal Institute of British Architects have constituted themselves a high tribunal in these matters, their verdicts will come before the public, and will, of course, call for strict criticism.—I send you my name; and am, Sir, &c.

AN INQUIRER.

IGNORANCE IS POWER, TOO.

At a *soirée* given by the Leeds Mechanics' Institution, last week, Mr. Charles Dickens, who presided, speaking of the spectral shadow of a certain dead and buried opposition to the spread of knowledge, said,—

"Imagine here, on either hand, two great towns like Leeds, full of busy men, all of them feeling necessarily, and some of them heavily, the burdens and inequalities inseparable from civilised society. In this town there is ignorance dense and dark; in that town, education—the best of education; that which the grown man from day to day and year to year furnishes for himself, and maintains for himself, and in right of which his education goes on all his life, instead of leaving off complacently just when he begins to live in the social system. Now, which of these two towns has a good man, or a good cause, reason to distrust and dread? 'The educated one,' does some timid politician, with a marvellously weak night, say (as I have known such politicians say), 'because knowledge is power, and because it won't do to have too much power abroad.' Why, ladies and gentlemen, reflect whether ignorance be not power, and a very dreadful power. Look where we will, do we not find it powerful for every kind of wrong and evil?—powerful to take its enemies to its heart, and strike its best friends down—powerful to fill the prisons, the hospitals, and the graves—powerful for blind violence, prejudice, and error, in all their gloomy and destructive shapes? Whereas, the power of knowledge, if I understand it, is—to bear and forbear—to learn the path of duty, and to tread it—to engender that self-respect which does not stop at self, but cherishes the best respect for the best objects,—to turn an always enlarging acquaintance with the joys and sorrows, capabilities and imperfections of our race, to daily account in mildness of life and gentleness of construction, and humble efforts for the improvement, stone by stone, of the whole social fabric."

At the same meeting, Mr. George Stephenson said—"I commenced his career at a lower standing than any man that was present there that night. He made that observation

for the purpose of encouraging the youthful mechanic to do as he had done—to persevere. And he could tell them that they occupied a most advantageous position,—they had had teachers who, going before them, had left them their great discoveries as a legacy and a guide, if they would take advantage of their teaching. But he remembered the time when there were none to guide and instruct the young mechanic. He knew that if they profited by the experience of those who had gone before them, they would be saved much trouble and annoyance, for the free interchange of ideas amongst mechanics would prevent a great deal of capital being expended uselessly. Many young mechanics, if they did not avail themselves of the teaching of those who had gone before them, would perhaps be induced to believe that they had made some discovery in mechanics, and when they had spent a great deal of time and money, they would make the unpleasant discovery that what they had considered an original invention had been put forth, it might be, more than twenty years before."

PROGRESS IN SLOUGH.

SIR,—The Sloughites are dreadfully slow to see improvements of any kind; they require the power of a steam-engine to set them in motion, but, when once moved, they go along at a railroad pace. They have just had such a power, even the power of the press, in the shape of THE BUILDER, which is read in the mechanics' reading-room as regularly and thoroughly as the *Times*.

For several seasons past the gas question had been mooted, but received no encouragement. A committee was formed a few weeks since (in consequence of suggestions thrown out by a lecturer), to see how the affair might be arranged. They convened a public meeting, at which they procured the attendance of a gas engineer. The result was, a company was formed on the spot, with a capital of £2,500, in 250 shares of 10*l.* each. 155 shares were taken in the room: the remainder were disposed of the next day. A meeting of the shareholders took place on December 3rd, to receive the deposits, when the committee were authorised to enrol the society. The spot of ground was then fixed on, and Mr. T. Sharp, of Nottingham, was appointed engineer. The works are to be commenced in the spring, so as to have them ready for the next winter. Upwards of three miles of main will be required to reach the different streets. Thanks to THE BUILDER for this great boon!

Subscriptions are still received towards the new church for the parish of Eton. The architect's estimate is 6,000*l.*

The alterations and restorations at Eton College Chapel are nearly completed. The temporary chapel, with its stained-glass windows, is advertised for sale by public auction. The bench ends are of poor design, and look very meagre. The roof, though well executed, appears very heavy. It is an open one, of oak, and is stained to an excessively dark shade. The featherings of the principal next the east wall interfere very greatly with the label and archivolt mouldings, and therefore have a bad effect.

The plan for establishing (or rather reviving) the general market at Slough, is unfortunately at a stand-still. As the greater part of the town is in the manor of Upton-cum-Chalvey, the mover of the scheme wrote to the lord of the manor, requesting aid: he declined sending cash, and "begged to warn the inhabitants from executing the works, as if they did he should take all the tolls, he having a patent for the same." The committee were thunderstruck, but, nevertheless, were determined not to be outdone, and decided upon erecting the market, &c. out of the manor, at the outskirts of the town. They, in consequence, entered into a treaty with a party (who owned the only suitable spot) for the purchase of about three-quarters of an acre, having a frontage of about 100 feet. After a length of time, an answer was obtained, and again they were balked, the price required being 1,500*l.* They must now wait till a more favourable time.

It appears it is sixty-five years since any market was held at Slough, and about forty years since a fair was held; therefore the solicitor to the committee thought the lord of the

manor had lost the right by desuetude, but as the lord of the manor was determined, and opposing him might lead to litigation, they thought it the wiser course to be out of his power. There was no lack of money, had other circumstances been favourable.

X. Y. Z.

NEW COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

THE ordinary meeting of the Westminster Commission, appointed to be held on Friday in last week, did not take place, in consequence of the supersedeas issued by the Lord Chancellor on Tuesday, and, therefore, all works and payments were declared to be necessarily suspended until the new commission should be properly constituted and sworn in. Great disappointment was expressed by several members of the old commission that matters were not properly closed and wound up, as had been proposed to be done at the final meeting, but which was prevented by the interference above referred to.

Late on Saturday night notices were received at the office in Greek-street, from the Metropolitan Sanitary Commission, calling upon the officers of the Sewers' Commission to give their attendance at Gwydyr House on Monday morning, at a general meeting of the board. They accordingly attended, as did also the officers of the other metropolitan commissions of sewers. At 12 o'clock Lord Morpeth took the chair, when the following members took the usual oath of office:—Lord Ebrington, Lord Ashley, Dr. Buckland, Mr. Hume, M.P., Hon. F. Byng, Dr. Arnott, Dr. S. Smith, Mr. R. A. Slaney, M.P., Sir J. Clark, Rev. W. Stone, Professor Owen, Sir H. De La Beche, Mr. J. Bidwell, Mr. J. Bullar, Mr. W. J. Broderip, Mr. R. L. Jones, Mr. J. Leslie, and Mr. E. Chadwick.

Mr. L. C. Hertslet, of the Westminster division, and Mr. Staples, of the Holborn and Finsbury division, were appointed clerks of those districts provisionally; and Messrs. Phillips and Roe, surveyors of the above divisions, were re-appointed surveyors provisionally, and Mr. Austin consulting-surveyor. A few formal resolutions were then put and agreed to.

In consequence of certain necessary arrangements to be made, it was considered impracticable to hold a court before the 16th instant, to which day this meeting stood adjourned.

The constitution of this new commission will require consideration. The great object of change should be IMPROVEMENT.

IMPROVEMENT OF ROADS IN KENTISH TOWN.—An action has just been decided in the Court of Queen's Bench, as to the liability of certain houses, situated in Kentish Town, to be rated by the commissioners appointed under 4 & 5 Vict. c. 67, for its improvement. The Kentish Town Commissioners had made a pavement all the way from Camden Town to Highgate, a space of three miles, up to the line of road in question, which they repaired, widened, and provided with footways, where the owners or occupiers had neglected to do so. In some places the pavement had to be widened about four feet, by going on the carriage-road, which, under 57 Geo. 3, was placed under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan commissioners, whose consent was obtained. This improvement involved an extension of the footway in a part of Southampton-terrace, from three feet, which it originally was, to seven feet; and it was the expense incurred in this addition of four feet in width, that formed the matter in dispute. The defendants contended that they were not liable, inasmuch as the footway was not that next or adjoining the frontage of their houses, that the money was not laid out on the three-foot footway in existence on the passing of the Act, or that it ought at all events to be shown that it was laid out upon the footway three feet wide. Their lordships gave judgment in favour of the Crown, on the ground that the footway in question was one that must be considered to come within the meaning of the Act, and over which the commissioners for the improvement of Kentish Town had full and complete control.